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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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HAER No. CA-215

Central Pacific Transcontinental Railroad, Tunnel 41
(Summit Tunnel)
("The Big Hole")
Southern Pacific Donner Pass Route Tunnels
Milepost 193.3
Donner Pass
Placer County
California

For written information regarding Tunnel 41, please refer to Central Pacific Transcontinental Railroad (HAER No. CA-196). Note also that all references to tunnel portals are given in Southern Pacific Railroad terminology. Headquartered in San Francisco, the SP considered all trains heading *away* from San Francisco to be eastbound, all trains heading *toward* San Francisco to be westbound, regardless of actual cardinal direction. Thus a train heading north from Los Angeles to Portland would be westbound until it passed San Francisco, at which time it would become eastbound. Similarly, the railroad referred to all tunnels and other structures along its lines in the same fashion, with tunnels always having west and east portals. Direction of view in the captions will indicate cardinal direction.

Documentation: 8 photographs (1997)

Ed Andersen, Photographer
John Snyder, Field Director

PHOTOGRAPHS

- CA-215-1 West portal of Snowshed 29, contextual view to east, 135mm lens. This is perhaps the last section of timber snowshed on this line. Integral with the east end of Tunnel 41, Snowshed 29 provides protection leading to the west portal of the tunnel. The snowshed today consists of (west to east) 199 feet of timber type T4 shed built in 1954, 365 feet of timber type T7 built in 1954, 85 feet of timber type T1 built in 1951, four feet of timber type T7 built in 1925 concurrent with Tunnel 41, and 41 feet of recent prefabricated concrete panel shed.
- CA-215-2 West portal of Snowshed 29, view to east, 135mm lens. Note the heavy timber frame, with battered posts to carry the tremendous snow loads of winter.
- CA-215-3 South side of Snowshed 29, view to northwest from west portal of Tunnel 41, 135mm lens. Note that the shed is essentially flat-roofed, and the appearance of a gable is created by the top chords of the supporting trusses. Sides are wide, rough-sawn planks.
- CA-215-4 Prefabricated concrete panel portion of Snowshed 29 abutting west portal of Tunnel 41, view to east, 135mm lens. Function of the elevated portion is unknown, but it may help to channel exhaust fumes out of the shed and the two-mile long tunnel.

Central Pacific Transcontinental Railroad, Tunnel 41

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- CA-215-5 East portal of Tunnel 41, contextual view to west-northwest, 135mm lens. Summit of Mount Judah, named for the visionary engineer who conceived and mapped the route of the first transcontinental railroad, rises above the tunnel.
- CA-215-6 East portal of Tunnel 41, protected by Snowshed 33, view to northwest, 135mm lens.
- CA-215-7 Detail, east portal of Tunnel 34/Snowshed 33, 135mm lens. Tall signal mast necessary in order to be seen above winter snows.
- CA-215-8 Detail, east portal of Tunnel 41 inside Snowshed 33, view to west-northwest, 135mm lens with electronic flash fill. The tiny white dot visible in the darkness of the tunnel is the west portal, two miles distant. The heavy steel beams carrying the concrete roof panels of the snowshed appear to be reused bridge girders.